

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /129 W

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R 301622Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8752

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3019

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, SOCI

SUBJ: CHURCH OFFICIALS ANSWER ATTACKS

1. SUMMARY. SANTIAGO ARCHDIOCESE ISSUED STATEMENT DEPLORING RECENT SHARP PUBLIC CRITICISM OF CARDINAL SILVA HENRIQUEZ AND BISHOP FERNANDO ARIZTIA, CATHOLIC REPRESENTATIVE ON INTER-DENOMINATIONAL COMMITTEE OF PEACE WHICH HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD HERE. MEANWHILE, EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN REPRESENTATIVE ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWAL FROM COMMITTEE. END SUMMARY.

2. SANTIAGO ARCHDIOCESE STATEMENT, DATED MAY 28 AND PRINTED IN SANTIAGO PRESS MAY 29, WAS SIGNED BY AUXILIARY BISHOPS ALVEAR (IN CHARGE IN SILVA'S ABSENCE), VALECH, AND HOURTON PLUS ALL SIX ARCHDIOCESAN REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS. STATEMENT NOTED CHURCH'S RELUCTANCE TO REPLY TO CRITICISM, BUT CLAIMED "BITTER AND IMPLACABLE CRITICISM" FORCED HIERARCHY TO RESPOND. WHILE RIGHT TO DISSENT IN NON-DOCTRINAL MATTERS IS RECOGNIZED, "ABUSIVE AND INSOLENT LANGUAGE AND LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE TRUTH IS UNACCEPTABLE." STATEMENT DECRIED "THOSE WHO HAVE EASY ACCESS TO THE MEDIA AND WHO CLAIM TO REPRESENT THE OPINION OF THE CHURCH" WHEN "VAST MAJORITY OF ACTIVE CATHOLICS CONTINUES
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TO SUPPORT THEIR BISHOPS."

3. STATEMENT STRONGLY DEFENDED CARDINAL SILVA (RETURNING TO CHILE MAY 30) AND BISHOP FERNANDO ARIZTIA, CATHOLIC REPRESENTATIVE ON INTERDENOMINATIONAL COMMITTEE OF PEACE, NOTING THAT SLANDEROUS ATTACKS ON THEM DID LITTLE TO FURTHER NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. STATEMENT CONCLUDED WITH PLEA TO HALT "CAMPAIGN OF HATE" AND TO JOIN TOGETHER FOR GOOD OF CHILE.

4. UNDER FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE "MASSIVE RESIGNATION FROM PEACE COMMITTEE", MAY 29, LA SEGUNDA CARRIED TEXT OF LETTER FROM EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH INSTRUCTING ITS MEMBERS TO CEASE PARTICIPATION IN COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES. LA SEGUNDA NOTED THAT BAPTIST REPRESENTATIVES PREVIOUSLY WITHDREW (SANTIAGO 2956).

5. WELL-PLACED CHURCH OFFICIAL TOLD EMBOFF THAT ARCHDIOCESE STATEMENT IS INTENDED AS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO SEVERAL VICIOUS ANTI-SILVA LETTERS PRINTED IN AFTERNOON DAILY "LA SEGUNDA" AS WELL AS SEGUNDA'S OWN ATTACKS ON ARIZTIA FOR HIS ALLEGED ROLE IN MEXICO CITY EXCELSIOR'S PUBLICATION OF A DOCUMENT FROM HIS COMMITTEE WHICH COMPILED TORTURE ALLEGATIONS (SANTIAGO 2712). GREMIALISTA-CONTROLLED (I.E. CONSERVATIVE) CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FEDERATION (FEUC) HAS ALSO ISSUED PUBLIC LETTER WHICH WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS (SANTIAGO 2212). MOREOVER, GROUP OF ELDERLY SANTIAGO PRELATES ADDRESSED LETTER OF FULSOME PRAISE TO JUNTA, PUBLISHED IN MAY 30 SANTIAGO PRESS.

6. COMMENT: EVIDENTLY, WAVES CREATED BY CARDINAL SILVA'S REMARKS AND BISHOPS' STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS CONTINUE TO RIPPLE THROUGH CHILEAN SOCIETY. GOVERNMENT NO DOUBT APPROVES, AND MAY HAVE STIMULATED, EVIDENCE THAT CHURCH HIERARCHY SPLIT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, WHILE CARDINAL'S SUPPORTERS STRESS PREPONDERANT CHURCH APPROVAL OF HIS POSITION. SIMILARLY, IN REACTING TO LEAK OF COMMITTEE OF PEACE DOCUMENTS ON TORTURE TO MEXICAN PRESS, SOME SOURCES WITHIN GOVERNMENT MAY BE HIGHLIGHTING DEFECTION OF PROTESTANT MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE, WHICH THEY CERTAINLY REGARD WITH SUSPICION. THUS, RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS CONTINUE TO PLAY PROMINENT PART IN THE ONGOING CONTROVERSY OVER HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH IS TAKING PLACE, MORE OR LESS COVERTLY, WITHIN CHILE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERSHIP, DEFAMATION, PRESS COMMENTS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS, COMMITTEES, PEACE GROUPS, CLERGYMEN, REPRISALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SANTIA03019
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740137-0033
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974057/aaaaafoo.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 MAY 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <25 MAR 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CHURCH OFFICIALS ANSWER ATTACKS
TAGS: PINT, SOCI, CI
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005